

March 23, 2004

The Honorable L. Alma Mansell  
President of the Senate  
and  
The Honorable Martin R. Stephens  
Speaker of the House

Dear President Mansell and Speaker Stephens :

This is to inform you that on March 23, 2004, I vetoed S.B. 115 SPECIAL ELECTION DATES, and have transmitted the bill to the Lieutenant Governor for filing.

The intention of Senate Bill 115 is to increase voter turn-out for special elections, which is commendable. General obligation bond elections dominated the discussion concerning this bill. However, the provisions of this bill extend beyond bond elections. It applies to any special election.

Limiting special elections to one date in both June and November severely limits the financial flexibility of local governments. It is conceivable that mid-year budget pressures could force a school district, for example, to seek a voted leeway to keep its budget in balance. Election dates in June are too late in the fiscal year and November dates may be too early in the fiscal year to realize the need for additional revenues. The only mid-year alternative is to cut teachers.

The state generally defers to locally elected governments as to matters particularly pertinent to the local community including locally levied taxes and bond issues. This bill attempts to come between these governments and their own citizens.

Just as the state dislikes federal mandates, we need to carefully consider the mandates we place on local governments. I believe this bill interjects the state's will on local governments and limits their ability to meet their own needs in a prudent manner.

Sincerely,

Olene S. Walker  
Governor